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The death of Osama bin Laden is highly unlikely to mark a turning point in the conflict between the United States and its allies on the one hand and militant Islamism epitomized by al Qaeda on the other. President Obama deserves much praise for ordering the operation to get bin Laden, and the brave Americans who carried that operation out so skillfully deserve the thanks of a grateful nation. But al Qaeda itself, to say nothing of the numerous franchises and affiliated movements sharing common goals with it, will not be defeated by the death of a single leader, even its founder and figurehead. Nor is it clear that its operational capabilities even in Pakistan will be seriously degraded with bin Laden's passing--available information suggests that he abandoned day-to-day operational control over the moment long ago, and the organization has survived the deaths of many senior leaders more actively involved in its activities. There is cause for celebration in the death of a deeply evil man with much blood on his hands and more innocent deaths in his mind, but no cause to waver in our determination to press forward in this conflict against a determined foe.

Public speculation about the complicity of the Pakistani government or security services either in harboring bin Laden or in supporting the U.S. operation that killed him is idle. Policy-makers and strategists would do much better to focus on the demonstrable facts about the threat militant Islamists based in Pakistan pose to Pakistan itself, its neighbors, our forces, and our homeland.

Those facts are distressing enough. With bin Laden dead, al Qaeda's leadership in Pakistan remains robust and significant. Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, an Egyptian with ties (both friendly and hostile) with the Muslim Brotherhood, is a more gifted theorist and better writer than bin Laden ever was, although far less rhetorically effective and unlikely to be an inspirational leader. Abu Yahya al Libi, a Libyan as his honorific denotes, is a skilled and determined operator. Zawahiri is, in fact, potentially very dangerous over the long term as a strategist. In the early years of the Iraq war, he strenuously objected to the efforts of al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi to ignite sectarian conflict in Iraq in order to fuel the Sunni opposition. Zarqawi launched a terror campaign against Iraq's Shi'a majority in a deliberate effort to incite reprisal attacks against Iraqi Sunnis, hoping thereby to convince the Sunnis that al Qaeda was their necessary champion. Zawahiri opposed that approach, arguing that their Islamist agenda was best served by focusing first on fighting the infidels together with the Shi'a, however impure their religion was in his view. In the short term, Zarqawi's policy prevailed--he did incite vicious sectarian reprisals against the Sunni that did for a time create support for al Qaeda in Iraq. But his terrorism went too far. By 2006, al Qaeda in Iraq was alienating Sunnis almost as rapidly as Shi'a, and the al Qaeda pressure on them combined with the pressure from the surge of troops and change in strategy in 2007 persuaded Iraq's Sunnis to give up the fight altogether. Zawahiri was shown there to be the shrewder strategist, giving us good cause for concern about a movement of which he is the leader. It is also noteworthy that the change in leadership in al Qaeda will result in the replacement of the Saudi bin Laden, whose roots and essence were in the Arabian Peninsula, with an Egyptian and a Libyan. Will that change result in a refocusing of the al Qaeda effort toward North Africa, more than would have occurred naturally? We shall see, but the prospect is worrying given the stalemate in Libya and the precariousness of Egypt. Nevertheless, bin Laden was a charismatic figure and a romantic figure in the eyes of many militant Islamists--the wealthy Saudi who gave up his luxurious life for jihad (although the

location of his death undermines that story considerably). It will be a blow to Islamist morale and set off a leadership struggle within the movement. It is thus significant, even though it is not likely to prove decisive.

Al Qaeda is not, unfortunately, the only Islamist group in Pakistan with regional or global aims. The largest and best organized such organization, rather, is the Lashkar-e Tayyiba--Army of the Pure, which is responsible most recently for the 2008 Mumbai attacks. LeT has deep roots in Kashmir and has historically focused its attentions on India. In that guise, it is more than dangerous enough, since its atrocities brought two nuclear powers close to war a few years ago and could readily do so again. But LeT is not a Kashmiri organization. Its ideology is pan-Islamist rather than Kashmiri nationalist, and its headquarters are in Punjab, near Lahore, rather than in Kashmir. LeT has entwined itself with the Pakistani military establishment and state. It provides foot soldiers and agents provocateurs for raids on Kashmir or in India. In the form of various charitable organizations it has organized relief for victims of the massive floods in Pakistan, runs schools (madrassas), and provides rudimentary shari'a justice in backward and lawless areas. It has also been active, although in a much more limited form, supporting Taliban insurgents fighting U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. LeT agents have attacked the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh. LeT poses an enormous challenge to any Pakistani leader who wanted to constrain it, let alone shut it down. Its pervasiveness throughout Pakistan gives it the potential to conduct terrorist and even guerrilla attacks even in the heartlands of Punjab and Sindh. Its wealth and organization give it a high degree of autonomy from any financial support it might receive from elements of the ISI. It is, thus, a terrorist organization with a broad and deep base of support, significant wealth, and an Islamist ideology not very different from al Qaeda's--and the prospects of the Pakistani state taking it on any time soon approach zero.

Pakistan is also home to the Tehrik-e Taliban-e Pakistan (TTP), an anomalous organization determined to fight someone but possibly willing to negotiate about whom. The TTP was formed as an umbrella organization for a number of militant Islamist groups that began fighting Pakistan when President General Pervez Musharraf declared his support for the U.S. War on Terror and fight in Afghanistan. It has historically had two more or less distinct centers--one in Waziristan, particularly in South Waziristan, and the other in the northern part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), especially Mohmand and Bajaur agencies. It was that northern branch, including the sub-group known as Tehrik-e Nafaz-e Shariat-e Mohammadi (TNSM), that pushed west into Dir and ultimately into Swat, thereby goading Kayani into a series of attacks that have driven the group back to its mountain bases in Mohmand and Bajaur (where Pakistani military operations are ongoing as we speak). The TNSM grouping has proven reliably hostile to Islamabad, and the Pakistani military has shown little hesitation to attack it. The Waziristan sub-group, however, seems more amenable to negotiation, at least after a major Pakistani military operation in 2010 cleared it out of most of South Waziristan. It has since dispersed somewhat to bases in Orakzai, Khyber, and North Waziristan, although some TTP fighters appear to be re-infiltrating South Waziristan as well. The TTP fighters in North Waziristan are part of a melange of tribal and Islamist groups that includes al Qaeda, Maulvi Nazir and Gul Bahadur's tribesmen, the Haqqani Network, and the small but vicious networks of Uzbek militants that have made Pakistan their home for many years. Those groups are generally more interested in fighting the U.S. in Afghanistan than in fighting Pakistan, and the pressures on the TTP there to join them in the jihad against the infidels across the Durand Line before worrying about Islamabad are greater than in the northern FATA. The TTP claimed responsibility for the failed attempt to detonate a car bomb in Times Square and has repeated its determination to carry out attacks against the U.S.

North Waziristan is the base of the Haqqani Network, a group of Islamist fighters formed during the anti-Soviet war under the leadership of Jalaluddin Haqqani, a legendary mujahid. The Haqqani Network is now run by his sons, Sirajuddin and Badruddin, and extended family as Jalaluddin has gotten old and infirm. With the passage of leadership from generation to generation, the group's aims and methods have also evolved. The Haqqani Network is now notorious for its spectacular attacks in and around Kabul and its willingness to kill Afghan civilians despite the formal prohibition against such killings by Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Siraj also appears to be more interested in becoming a more significant player in the regional and global Islamist movement than his father, whose interests were mostly confined to his historic tribal lands in southeastern Afghanistan (especially the provinces of Khost, Paktia, and Paktika). Recent open-source reporting suggests that the Haqqani Network is gaining greater access to routes of attack into Afghanistan, moreover. Reporting indicates that the ending of a long-standing feud between the militant Islamist groups and the Shi'a Turi tribe that inhabits strategic terrain in Kurram Agency, just north of North Waziristan, has given the Haqqanis access to the main routes leading to Parachinar and from there directly into eastern Khost, Paktia, and Logar Provinces--and the shorter road to Kabul. Some of the reporting suggests that the Pakistani military has abetted this "resolution" of the feud by pressuring the Turi so as to facilitate Haqqani movement into and through their areas.

Pakistan is also home to the headquarters of Mullah Omar's branch of the Taliban insurgency in Quetta. This group sees itself as a government-in-exile, having ruled Afghanistan before 2001, and maintains shadow governors for almost every province and many districts in Afghanistan. It had maintained unquestioned safe-havens in Afghanistan's southern provinces, particularly Helmand and Kandahar, until the addition of forces and change of strategy ordered by President Obama and overseen first by General Stanley McChrystal and now by General David Petraeus, took those safe-havens away. Another, smaller Afghan insurgent group known as the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), also has its main bases in Pakistan.

One could list a host of other groups that threaten Pakistan's internal cohesiveness and one--Jundallah--that conducts terrorist attacks in Iran from Pakistani territory, but it is not necessary to belabor the point. Pakistan is host to a large number of extremely dangerous militant Islamist organizations whose aims vary from simply destroying the Pakistani state to destroying the entire Western way of life. The threat from these groups in Pakistan is severe.

The Pakistani state, police, and military have taken very limited steps against most of these groups. On the positive side, Pakistan has generally tolerated American military strikes against key leaders in the FATA and has likely cooperated in efforts against al Qaeda that have reduced the size and capabilities of that group to a small core leadership with limited operational ability. The Pakistani military took dramatic and painful steps to protect its people from encroachments by the Islamists into Swat and then continued the drive to clear their bases in South Waziristan, Bajaur, and now Mohmand. The Pakistani Army and Frontier Corps have lost thousands of soldiers in these battles, and thousands of Pakistani civilians have suffered and died at the hands of Islamist militants and during these operations. The success of those efforts remains unclear in some areas, but the overall impact is not--TNSM and TTP have been driven out of Swat and are very much on the defensive in their traditional strongholds in the FATA, which remain under pressure. The scale of the efforts was great--multiple Pakistani regular army divisions were involved, including some from the corps stationed along the Indian border that would be essential in an Indo-Pakistan conflict, the deployment of which to fight in Pashtun lands indicates the seriousness with which the Pakistani military leadership took that particular threat. The Pakistani military and police have also operated against Baluchi separatist fighters and against some of the worst

sectarian groups in Karachi and elsewhere. We should not diminish or dismiss the efforts or the losses Pakistan has made and taken in these actions simply because Islamabad has focused on the groups that threaten Pakistan itself rather than on those that threaten its neighbors or us.

It is a fact, however, that Pakistan has taken no meaningful action against LeT, the Haqqani Network, HiG, or Mullah Omar. Pakistan's XII Corps headquarters are in Quetta, near Mullah Omar's primary bases, but have conducted no operations against his group. An entire Pakistani regular division is stationed in North Waziristan, near the Haqqani headquarters in Miram Shah, and has conducted no operations against that group. Musharraf formally outlawed LeT, but did not dismantle the group and, although LeT leaders have periodically been jailed or placed under house arrest, they have also been periodically released with no further action taken against them. LeT bases and madrassas are obvious and well-known, as are some of the Haqqani madrassas. Pakistan has not shut them down. It is not even necessary to discuss the accusations of Pakistani support for the Taliban, the Haqqanis, or LeT to see that Pakistan's performance against militant Islamist groups to date has been uneven, inconsistent, and inadequate.

That observation based on cold and incontrovertible fact brings with it no obvious short-term policy solution, however. These conditions have persisted when the U.S. gave aid to Pakistan generously and when the U.S. withheld all aid. They have persisted during periods of greatest tension between Islamabad and Delhi and during periods of relative detente. They have persisted when civilians nominally or actually ruled the country and when the military has done so. Three things will have to occur, in all likelihood, before these conditions dissipate. First, Pakistan's ruling elite will have to come to the consensus that supporting some militant Islamists as proxies in Afghanistan and Kashmir is a failed strategy. Second, they will have to agree that all militant Islamists pose a threat to Pakistan's survival and well-being and are, at the end of the day, beyond the ability of the state and even the army to control as proxies. Third, they will have to make the hard decisions not only to act against groups that can cause them great pain, but also to seek and accept the assistance of the U.S. and other would-be allies in an internal struggle that is likely to be long, expensive, and bloody. Pakistani long-term stability and even state viability rests on its leaders making these decisions, but the scale of the challenge they face in carrying through on them would make any policy-maker blanch.

Of these things, the U.S. can only directly affect the first. The current American and NATO strategy in Afghanistan is designed to degrade the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and HiG within Afghanistan and to demonstrate beyond question that those groups will be unable to direct the course of events in Afghanistan even after Western forces hand over security responsibilities to the Afghan government and are significantly reduced in number. Demonstrating that those groups will fail will compel anyone in Pakistan who believes supporting them as proxies to be a plausible strategy for securing Pakistan's interests to re-evaluate that approach fundamentally. The challenge for American strategy toward Pakistan will be finding ways to accompany progress against Islamist proxies in Afghanistan with efforts to help Pakistan's ruling elite come to consensus on the overall dangers that Islamist groups within Pakistan pose and on the need to accept the costs and risks of combating and defeating them within Pakistan itself. The worst thing we could do now would be to take bin Laden's death or the progress made to date in Afghanistan as an excuse to withdraw forces prematurely, thereby easing the pressure on militant Islamist groups in Afghanistan just as we would otherwise approach the point of maximum pressure on them and those who support them. Now is the time to reinforce success by exercising patience in Afghanistan and allowing the strategy designed to persuade everyone in Afghanistan and in Pakistan that the militant Islamists in Afghanistan will fail to continue to work.

